

**Governor's Proposed FY23 Budget Adjustments**  
**Appropriations Hearing**  
**HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023**  
**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**  
**Thursday, February 24th, 2022**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and other members of the appropriations committee. My name is Sarah Lombardo, and I am a registered voter. I vote for those who support mental health. Today I'm going to speak to you about funding Teamworks, the clubhouse of Reliance Health.

First, a thank you to Cathy Osten for Christmas Caroling with us.

You brought a smile to our members' faces, and during Covid, everyone can use a smile. Members often tell us, Teamworks is a safe place to make friends where social and spiritual growth happens. It's a place people can relax with peers, and drink a smoothie while watching a movie.

When you have friends, you have more fun in your life: places to go, people to see. It may sound cliché, but just think about a good friend in your life. What do they add to it? Think about being totally misunderstood your whole life and then coming to a social mecca where common ground can be found. Today, I'd like you to see what upwards of 200 members see in Teamworks.

Members have enjoyed a group called Inner Peace. There people were free to talk about how their spiritual life was such a strong part of their recovery, be it to cope with an addiction or mental illness. Topics have ranged from Love to Courage to Hope. There, members did not feel as alone as previously.

Another favorite, Anger Management group is where members often recall instances of anger and they process them with the group. This gives them an

outlet for pent up anger, a healthy alternative to self-harm leading to a costly hospitalization that the state would have to absorb.

Think about your own life, has this time of COVID-19 been harder than usual for you? Now think about if you had a biochemical brain imbalance. Multiply your own hardship by 1000% and you've got an idea what our members have been facing.

As well as anger outlets and spiritual outlets, we have groups tailored just for men and women and art and writing groups, too! We've even combined groups before. Teamworks makes the most of its community. Trips include museums, dine outs, and holiday festivities, as well as the movies, playing pool, or bowling.

Thus, people have challenges and often isolate feeling alone and resort to dire measures that incur the state great cost. Teamworks has the solution to social isolation, a place where growth is achieved, people get active, and that good old common ground is found.

You can see how our services work. In order to keep our services we need much more funding. The cost of living has jumped a staggering 7% this year. We are thankful for the 4% you have given, but because of the 2017 5% DMHAS budget cut, employees are still behind 1% . Moreover, because of the annual rates of inflation and not receiving any COLA in the past 15 years, there is a 22-28% deficit in pay. As a result, staff are often side by side with members using food stamps, and there is less of a draw for future employees. Furthermore, the agency is challenged at providing services at ultimate capability.

Actions speak louder than words. If you support mental health, start showing it monetarily. Thank you.